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THE WASHINGTON POST
12 September 1981

Lt. Cooke Revealed Fantasies During Polygraph Test

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Air Force 2nd Lt. Christopher M. Cooke "fantasized" about shooting the members of his Titan II missile crew if they ever caught him photographing secret documents in their missile silo.

He also dreamed of a quick escape from the United States with a false passport and cash from the Soviet embassy, perhaps 1,000 pounds in British currency, that he could deposit in an overseas bank, an Air Force investigator testified yesterday during the first stage of Cooke's court-martial at Andrews Air Force Base.

The witness, special agent Gerald W. Craig of the Air Force Office of Special Investigations (OSI), said Cooke—whose secret contacts with the Soviets began in mid-1980—made the admissions May 22 at the windup of a polygraph examination OSI had been administering after promising Cooke immunity if he passed. Craig said he was satisfied at the conclusion of the three-day test that there was "no deception indicated."

The startling account of the polygraph test, which Cooke's military lawyer encouraged him to take, was quickly followed by a scathing denunciation of Brig. Gen. C. Claude Teagarden, the chief legal adviser for the Strategic Air Command. It was Teagarden who evidently engineered the 26-year-old officer's prosecution, promises notwithstanding.

Testifying with a flow of pent-up indignation, Cooke's Air Force lawyer, Capt. Francis W. Pedrotty III, accused the general of using bullying tactics to dissuade Pedrotty from pressing for a written guarantee of immunity for Cooke and then lying repeatedly about the oral promises that were made.

Later, Pedrotty said, Teagarden even took the tack of suggesting that Cooke "may be crazy" and raising the specter of his confinement in a psychiatric ward.

A career officer, Pedrotty, 32, was hurriedly ordered to serve as Cooke's defense counsel at Langley Air Force Base and first met his client there shortly after noon on May 9, four days after Cooke had been picked up.

The defense lawyer said he got a quick but thorough briefing from Cooke's chief interrogator, OSI Lt. Col. Jerome Hoffman, who told him they were not interested in prosecution but in finding out whether Cooke had compromised SAC's ability to wage war. Hoffman said SAC was willing to offer Cooke an honorable discharge if the young deputy missile crew commander would tell the truth and then pass a lie detector test.

After a huddle with Cooke, Pedrotty said he also sensed that his client had not been candid with his interrogators up to that point. Pedrotty said he asked "who he [Hoffman] was dealing with at SAC" and was put in touch with Gen. Teagarden whom Pedrotty had also met in Europe. They talked on the phone while Hoffman listened on an extension, the court-martial was told.

Teagarden "started reciting to me the benefits Lt. Cooke could have if Lt. Cooke would cooperate," Pedrotty testified. "I said, 'General, that's fine, but my client wants a written agreement.' He said, 'Oh, no, we're going to have no written agreements here.'"

When Pedrotty persisted, he said Teagarden threatened to haul Cooke back to McConnell Air Force Base in Wichita on charges and warned that a T39 jet was standing by to do just that.

"Then he said, 'We're all men of integrity, Frank. We go back a long way.' I said I knew that, but that still wasn't sufficient... at that point, he became upset with me... he said, 'You also know the wrath of Teagarden.' I said, 'Yes sir, I'm familiar with the wrath of Teagarden,' " Pedrotty testified.

All things considered, Pedrotty said he decided to simply get Teagarden to spell out as explicitly as possible over the phone just what Cooke was being offered.

"I said, 'You mean if my client tells the truth and passes a polygraph, he'll be discharged with no prosecution?' " Pedrotty recalled saying. "I can remember three times saying, 'No prosecution?' " He [Teagarden] said, 'That's correct.' " Pedrotty said he also took pains to ask Teagarden whether SAC's commander in chief, Gen. Richard Ellis, had approved the offer.

"He said, 'Yes, the CINC [commander in chief] supports me down the line in this,' " Pedrotty said, adding later, "I had to put my faith in the U.S. judicial system."

Teagarden has offered a far different version. In a July 29 affidavit, for instance, he claimed he told Pedrotty that a statement Cooke had already given to OSI investigators on May 7 had to be shown to "be wholly true" and established by polygraph before any assurances could be given.

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